



The Jewish

# Gaily Forward

Adar + Nisan + Iyyar 5775 ■ March + April 2015

## Prof. Marc Dollinger on *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav*: “An Emblem of Jewish Life in America”

BY ELLIOTT T. VOGEL

On Friday, December 12, Dr. Marc Dollinger, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Chair in Jewish Studies and Social Responsibility at San Francisco State University, and long-time friend of Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, helped Sha'ar Zahav celebrate the fifth anniversary of the publication of *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav* by sharing his perspective on the importance of *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav* and its relevance as an “emblem of Jewish life in America.” He spoke about the significance of the siddur during a time of transition for the synagogue (as well as beyond). Dr. Dollinger discussed the significance of our siddur as a cultural document, how it reflects current mainstream American Jewish thought, and its role in helping to create new liturgical forms and expressions that are important for Jewish spirituality.

He noted there are broader questions our community should be contemplating on this anniversary. As our congregation prepares for a clergy transition, Dr. Dollinger framed a number of questions including: “What does it mean to be an American Jew in the 21st century?” “How do our congregation’s values fit within the landscape of Jewish values in the world today?” “What will be our next creative and innovative project?” In his talk, he gave voice to both complications and passions, and offered members some “thanksgiving” to balance anxiety-provoking questions about the future of our synagogue and its clergy leadership.

Dr. Dollinger took his audience on a wide-ranging historical journey, from the landmark stained glass window at Congregation Sherith Israel which shows Moses receiving the Ten Commandments in Yosemite, to Jews’ wider integration into American society, to the acceptance of LGBT Jews into the Reform (and other) Jewish movements in America, and the founding of Sha'ar Zahav in 1977. “On the grandest level,” he told listeners,



“we are engaged in the challenges and opportunities of modern Jewish life.” As a historian who studies Jewish life in America, he noted that the five-year anniversary of the publishing of our siddur is important because it represents a landmark in Jewish history because our siddur “is written from LGBT perspectives, which by necessity speak truths that rarely even appear in the consciousness of the wider community. It expands and challenges the whole idea of modern midrash as it resets the foundations, the boundaries, and the limits of prayer. It reinvestigates us to contemplate why we pray, and what our kavanah (our required intention), should be.”

His drash also held a few nudges from a historian to members of CSZ to take this moment in time to ask broader questions. To challenge ourselves to look beyond the anniversary and think about what our congregation will represent in the future. As Jews in the diaspora, we are used to looking beyond the value of any given institution, be it a temple, a kingdom or a nation. Dr. Dollinger’s talk included our siddur, perhaps because of its finite and bound presence as a book stuck in a particular historical moment, among those “hallowed institutions” that Jews have always been likely to question and, at times and for various reasons, to abandon. His talk reminded us that the world has changed in the five years since the siddur was published, and that it might appear not as exciting to younger members of the synagogue.

In a follow-up interview, Dr. Dollinger said that he would like members of the congregation to think about the role *Siddur Sha'ar Zahav* plays within the Reform movement, as well as the larger Jewish world of the 21st century, and that he plans to consider these implications in his own upcoming book.

On Tuesday, March 3 at 7:30 pm, Dr. Dollinger will speak at Sha'ar Zahav about “US Jews and Israel: An Evolving Relationship.”



# L'Dor V'Dor



**OVER MY YEARS** of service to Sha'ar Zahav, I have been grateful for the privilege of participating in more than a hundred b'nei mitzvah services, each one unique and extraordinarily special. As individual as each service has been, there are a few similarities in every service that stand out and which distinguish us from other communities: the way adult congregants mentor our students; the way our students question authority with their d'var Torah and often keep it as a surprise for their parents until the special day; and the way our young people are witnessed by so many adult members in our congregation who are attending because they feel and want to be intertwined with the next generation.

L'dor v'dor, from generation to generation—I've been looking forward to my own child's simcha (celebration) for more than thirteen years and now, suddenly, it has arrived. Among the moments when I will no doubt well up with tears will be the point where she leads the congregation in singing l'dor v'dor, from generation to generation, and the moment when we will pass the Torah from one generation to the next generation. Lilah will then stand before the congregation and lead us in the shema. And too, the transformational moment in the Torah service when our bat mitzvah is called to the Torah for her first aliyah. In each of these instances, she will be establishing her own link in the chain of tradition and I imagine feeling the warmth and love of my beloved father and mother smiling upon me. For that brief moment, I will surely feel as though I have fulfilled my duty to my child and my duty to my parents to receive and transmit Torah. Blessed is the Holy One, who obligates us to teach and be involved with the next generation.

In the Zohar (the foundational work of Kabbalah), there is a story that Rav Hiya and Rav Jose were traveling in Kurdistan. There they observed the deep ravines in the landscape. Rav Hiya said, "Surely they must be vestiges of *mai Noach*, the great flood." The question is why would God leave them there for us, generations later, to see? As Rav Hiya taught, it is obvious that God wants to make sure that the memories of those who do God's will continue to endure. In fact, God ordains that those good people will be remembered here on earth from generation

to generation and also on high. But what about the memory of the not-so-good, like the generation of the flood? One might think we are supposed to forget them; after all, they didn't do God's will. But these too, taught Rav Hiya, we remember from generation to generation. We see the ravines, and we remember.

The spirit of Rav Hiya's teaching is at the heart of why, at a brit mila, we oftentimes bless the baby with a two-fold wish: that he will see the wonder of the world and marvel at all the miracles in his life, and that he will also remain open to the pain and ugliness that exist. We want our children to see that we Jews are called upon to bring justice where there is none, to bring food where there are hungry people, to be compassionate and loving even in a world which seems callous and uncaring. *Bemakom she'ayn anashim, hishtadel l'hiyot ish*: In a place that has lost its humanity, Jews must strive to be human.

So too, at a bat mitzvah, we find the spirit of Rav Hiya's teaching. In every generation, Jews have seen to it to remember the bad with the good because our mission and purpose as a people is to draw strength from our blessings and find ways to heal when faced with adversity. The strength of generations of our people has been our ability to share and sweeten the joy in good times and hold one closer during the bad times. As my family and the congregational family gather to celebrate this simcha, we give thanks to you and to God for the many ways you've held us in good times and hard times.

*Eloheinu, v'elohei doroteichem*. Our God and God of the generations of our people, sustain this holy congregation and our members who have striven to draw closer to You by drawing closer to one another. May they continue to share their lives with the congregation, strengthening their ties to their family and to the Sha'ar Zahav family. May the years ahead be ones of blessing and fullness of joy, of finding holiness in the ordinary, of finding support when we are needy, of finding courage in times of trouble and of discovering new ways to honor God and sustain our people. In this way, *l'dor v'dor naggid godlecha*, we will ever be able to praise your Name God, from generation to generation.

Thank you, Sha'ar Zahav, for the privilege of having been part of a generation in the life and times of this amazingly creative community.

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Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism, the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews, and the San Francisco Organizing Project



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# In a Liminal State of Mind



**HERE WE ARE** in February. The year is flying by. Our transition period is moving forward at a rapid speed and, for many of us, our anxiety about the future is increasing. Recently, I started receiving multiple emails from congregants. The rumor mill was going full speed ahead and I was not keeping up with it. People wanted to know what was going on. My goal is to keep you all informed as we move through this year. It's just that the year is moving faster than I could have possibly imagined.

I've had time to reflect on the questions that were asked and the nature of the rumors. On reflection, I realized that it has to do with our liminal status. We are betwixt and between. Things are changing and very few of us really like changes. It makes us uncomfortable.

A number of years ago, I took a class about the mikva (ritual bath). Lisa Schiffman, the author of the book *Generation J*, was our speaker. In her book, the chapter on the mikva is full

of wisdom on being betwixt and between. She states that "[l]iminality is the gray area. It's the step before transformation, a necessary and uncomfortable state of being." That sounds like our process of saying goodbye to our rabbi and looking forward to the future.

I've had many discussions with our staff and our members about our transition. Although it may feel unclear, it is also an exciting time for all of us. We have many events planned to honor Rabbi Angel (the dates of the events are below this column). We are looking ahead and figuring out together what will be in place when July 1 arrives.

Thanks to our leadership I have been reminded that we have many volunteers who will help with the transition. People will step up. We have been betwixt and between before and our amazing congregants and our staff will once again help ease us into the next phrase of being CSZ. I hope that you join me in honoring our rabbi. I also hope that you can share the optimism that I have as we move forward.

## Honoring Rabbi Angel

Come to one or all of these events to honor and thank Rabbi Angel for her years of service to our community:

<b>Havdalah</b>	Saturday, April 18	East Bay Location, 7:00 pm
<b>Picnic</b>	Saturday, May 2	Meet in CSZ lobby at 12:30 pm to walk to Dolores Park
<b>Havdalah</b>	Saturday, May 16	San Francisco Location, 7:00 pm
<b>Appreciation Shabbat</b>	Friday, June 12	Sha'ar Zahav, 7:30 pm

Watch your weekly email for RSVP information. Havdalah locations will be provided once you respond.

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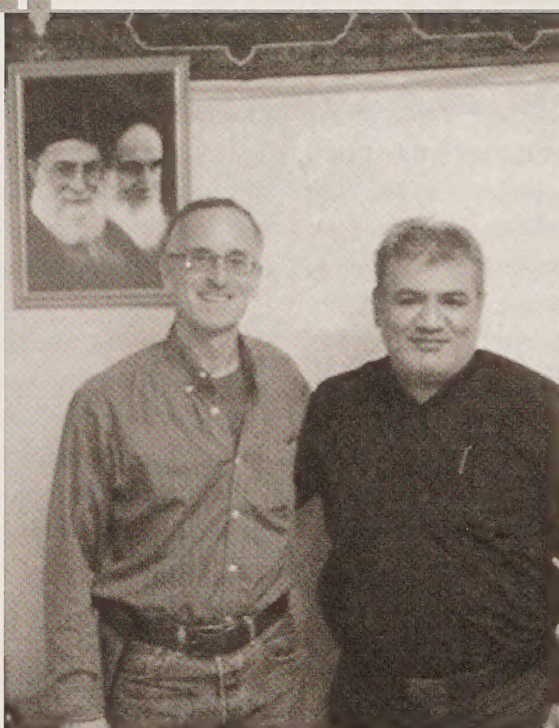
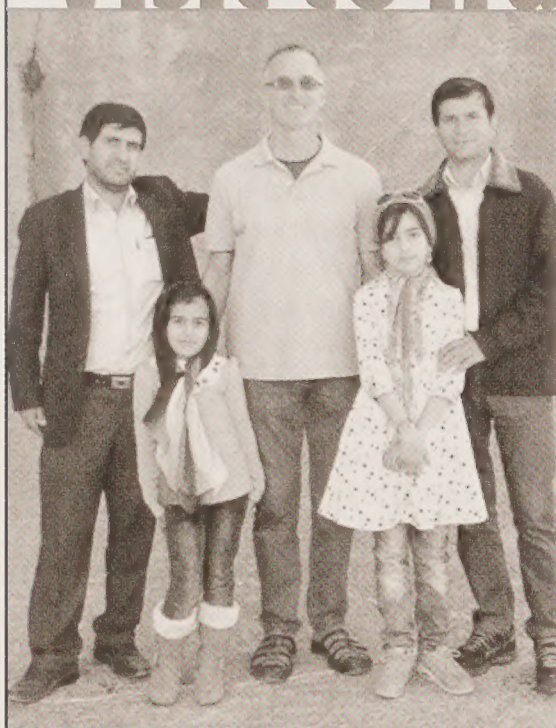
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# Visit to Iran



## BY RON LEZELL

From November 24 through December 2, I visited the Islamic Republic of Iran, arriving and departing from Tehran, flying to Shiraz and taking a public bus to Esfahan. It was a fantastic journey. I met warm, hospitable Iranians on the street, in cafes and at the great sites. People were surprised to meet and eager to speak with an American, and have their picture taken. The food was fantastic, the cities safe but crowded; the only danger I felt was maneuvering through traffic to cross streets.

Not knowing what to expect, although reassured that Western visitors on a tourist visa have had no problems, the visit was at once an honor and privilege, fun, educational, complicated and full of contradictions. I was able to deviate from the required established itinerary, achieving the desired freedom and independence from my guide. I had told my travel agent in the U.S. I was gay, Jewish, and had visited Israel many times. While I never discussed the gay angle, I did speak about and experience issues of Judaism and the “Zionist Entity.”

I learned from my 43-year-old guide how his life has revolved around The Revolution, The War (1980-88 Iran/Iraq), and Sanctions. While an experienced guide in Iran, China and the former Soviet Republics, he’s never visited the West. In my opinion, he and the Iranians I met suffer from propaganda, conspiracy and martyrdom theories, and fear-instilling victimhood emanating from the Supreme Leader’s government. In this totalitarian theocracy, with a well-educated and tech-savvy public, pictures of Ayatollah (Imam) Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei and tributes to the martyrs of The War are pervasive. “Illegal” satellite dishes are everywhere, but it appears that Western news stations are not generally available. Paramount in the news

was an obsession with the Zionist regime, the U.S. (“arrogant power”) claimed support of the heretics and infidels of *ISIS* (known as *Takfiri*), and the Shia/Sunni divide.

As I visited many sites including palaces, shrines, mosques and bazaars, the greatest highlights of my trip could not have been planned. They included a conversation with the head of The Martyr’s Museum (across from the former U.S. Embassy, now known as the Den of Espionage, in Tehran) and a lengthy “religious consultation” at the spectacular Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz with two clerics who knew I was Jewish and with whom I had a fascinating, troubling, yet mutually respectful conversation about Israel and American politics. I also had the honor of leading an incredible, wide-ranging Q&A with engaged and bright students in an English language class at a boy’s public high school in Esfahan.

But there was no deeper experience than my connecting over Shabbat in Shiraz, in a synagogue and in a home, with a large family, which now feels like mine; we stay connected on WhatsApp and email. We welcomed Shabbat together, with delicious food, singing, dancing and even homemade raisin-based vodka. There was a profound sense of Jewish peoplehood; it was as if we’d met before. Without my guide to translate from/to Farsi, we communicated in broken English and Hebrew. Their Jewish pride seems coupled with a strong sense of belonging to the Iranian culture.

Forty miles from Shiraz, I visited the World Heritage Site, Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid period (550-330 BCE). It is there that the ancient city of Shushan (Susa) existed, and where the events of the Book of Esther—the story of Purim—are said to have occurred. On Friday, March 6 (the day after Purim), I’ll speak about my experience with the Jewish community in Shiraz and, following services, will show pictures and a video.



# Esti Kenan: A Musical Monster

BY CANTOR SHARON BERNSTEIN

Sha'ar Zahav is enormously lucky to be welcoming Esti Kenan to our Erev Shabbat service on Friday, March 20 at 7:30 pm. With her, we will experience a Shabbat of Judeo-Spanish song, piyut, learning, blessing, and, most of all, a sense of the unreal.

I first met Esti Kenan in Jerusalem in the spring of 2000. She was a good friend of my then-new-boyfriend, Francesco, and was giving a concert at the Y. Francesco described her in what I've come to know as his highest terms: "She's a monster," accompanied by a slight shake of the head at the unreal. Meaning: how on *earth* does she sing like that?

Unreal indeed. Esti first trained as a dancer and choreographer, then as a percussionist. She spent some years dancing in New York, and playing drums in a salsa band. Her singing began organically, as she fell in love with the Ladino songs sung by old women, studying specifically with Bienvenida (Berta) Aguado, from Turkey. She then became fascinated with the traditions of *piyut* (sung liturgical poems, such as "L'cha Dodi" and "Adon Olam"), and became a pupil of Salim al-Nur (Shlomo Ziv-Li), from whom she learned *maqam* (Arabic musical modes and art of improvisation), and spending time with the until-then exclusively male group of *paytanim* (experts in piyut) at their weekly Thursday meetings at Mount Zion.



Her voice, uncommonly low, distinct, and earthy, etched with vital and penetrating energy, has attracted a number of prominent composers of

new music to write for her: Luciano Berio wrote the solo of his *Ofanim* for her; Fabio Vacchi wrote an entire opera – *Il Viaggio* – with her as the central character; and Israeli composers Betty Olivero, Oded Zehavi, Noam Sheriff, Andre Hajdu and Tsipi Fleischer have also created music for her. She has performed with major orchestras around the world, including the Berlin and Israeli Philharmonics.

In 1994, she began a long-term collaboration with percussionist Oren Freed. As *Duo Kol Tof*, and later, with the addition of Moroccan oud player Armond Sabach, as *Kol Oud Tof*, they explored a variety of repertoires, specializing in Arab-Andalusian Jewish music. Their performances incorporate a mix of Judeo-Spanish song, piyut, and her own compositions; a blend of voice, string, percussion and dance. She is riveting, fulfilling, taking herself and those listening to places beyond.

## Scholar-in-Residence

### Ruti Regan of Jewish Theological Seminary Friday and Saturday April 24-25

Ruti Regan is a Torah scribe, rabbinical student, teacher, and a disabled disability rights advocate. Her core Jewish value is that we are all made b'tzelem Elohim, in God's image. Regan sees it as her rabbinic mission to help the Jewish community live by this value more fully in the area of disability. Regan works to provide spiritual resources to disabled people struggling with dehumanization, and to help communities recognize and address ways in which they are preventing people with disabilities from participating on equal terms. She writes a blog on related issues at [realsocialskills.org](http://realsocialskills.org).

This exploration of disability and access is particularly timely as we envision our future as a Jewish, progressive, diverse community that honors and maintains our LGBTQ culture and history. To create a community that flourishes, we must synthesize the different aspects of our identities and our community.

In April 2014, Sha'ar Zahav's Access Committee sponsored its first Access Shabbat. Disability and chronic illness have affected our lives and the lives of people we love. We heard stories from many members of our community about the time when disabilities showed up in our lives, the experiences which



challenged or changed us, and our current relationship to disability and chronic illness. This year's Shabbaton will build upon last year's work to help us envision how to integrate those stories into our community's conversations and decisions.

Regan will deliver the d'var Torah on Friday evening and will teach our Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer

students on Saturday morning. After services on Saturday, we will have a Shabbat luncheon and then Regan will lead an afternoon Torah study. Adults and children are welcome. We will also have childcare for younger children.

Please contact the Sha'ar Zahav office for questions or accommodation needs—let us know how we can better provide mobility, sensory, social and cognitive access—and please remember to honor Sha'ar Zahav's scent free policy.



# Introducing the B'nei Mitzvah



## Chava Novogrodsky-Godt

Chava Novogrodsky-Godt, daughter of Stephanie Godt and Ellen Novogrodsky, will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on March 7.

Chava has been a member of Sha'ar Zahav her entire life. She attends Creative Arts Charter

School, where she is a Safe School Ambassador for her second year. She went through leadership training and takes pride in helping her school be a safe place for all students. This semester she is excited to be working with kindergartners and first graders.

Chava enjoys all art, especially dance, and is passionate about theater. She is very enthusiastic and engaging, and enjoys community building and planning events. She has a strong sense of social justice and especially enjoys volunteering at the Food Bank. She will be collecting food donations for the Food Bank at CSZ March 2–March 9.

In her free time, Chava enjoys spending time with her friends and family. She is very excited to become a Bat Mitzvah.

## Rami Harel Kripke-Ludwig



Rami Kripke-Ludwig, son of Gail Ludwig and Clarissa Kripke, will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on March 21.

Rami lives in San Francisco and attends Wings Learning Center in Redwood City. He loves being outside in nature among the trees or at the beach. Swimming in the Pacific Ocean is sometimes a spiritual experience for him, as is hiking in the woods. "I like soy milk by the gallon and reading about science and space technology, like satellites. Riding in the back of car with no seatbelt on is my dream."

Rami is excited to become a Bar Mitzvah and appreciates the help and guidance of Cantor Sharon Bernstein, Ruti Regan, Trudi Hauptman and his mentor Shelli Fein.

## Lilah Segal-Angel



Lilah Segal-Angel, daughter of Karen Segal and Rabbi Camille Angel, will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on March 28.

Lilah lives in San Francisco and attends A.P. Giannini Middle School. She enjoys playing soccer, softball, saxophone and spending time with family and friends.

Some of her favorite activities are going to the beach (rain or shine) and exploring in the woods. She is a huge Broadway fan. Her favorite musicals include *Wicked*, *A Gentleman's Guide To Love And Murder*, and *Chicago*. She listens to the songs, sings every word and never gets tired of them! She is a proud queer spawn (the child of LGBT parents) and is not afraid to show it!

Lilah wants to give a great big shout-out to her mentor, Ora Prochovnick. She is excited to step up to become a Bat Mitzvah!

## Quinn Elliott Klaiman



Quinn Elliott Klaiman, son of Virginia Donohue and Mark Klaiman, will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on April 11. He has been a member of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav since birth.

Quinn is a seventh grader at Brandeis Hillel Day School where he is secretary of the middle school community board. He also plays saxophone in the band and his favorite subject is social studies.

Quinn loves ice hockey and has played since he was 7 years old. He is assistant captain of the San Francisco Sabercats travel hockey team. This will be Quinn's second year playing lacrosse with Riptide.

Quinn is very devoted to his dog, Oscar, and can sometimes be convinced to help out with the other family pets, Splash, Dusty and Stan Lee.

## Become a Part of a Caring Community

By Mark Mackler, Phil Charney and Marshall Gold, Bikkur Cholim Coordinators

Mensch opportunity! Give the gift of *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick) and help fellow Sha'ar Zahav members who are ill or injured with simple tasks such as dropping off a meal, making a home visit, checking in by phone, or providing a ride to the doctor. We are in the process of revitalizing our bikkur cholim program by reaching out to the whole congregation. All members

now have a chance to participate in the holy mitzvah of caring for their fellow congregants. This is a fantastic way to volunteer and build community.

To become a part of this caring community, please sign up with "Lotsa Helping Hands" by going to [www.lotsahelpinghands.com/c/721551](http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com/c/721551). Once you register, you will be able to automatically sign in anytime you want to offer help. We will send you emails letting you know when a member needs support.

**Members in Need:** If you or another member would like assistance from our CSZ community, please contact the synagogue office or one of the Coordinators at [bikkurcholim@shaarzahav.org](mailto:bikkurcholim@shaarzahav.org).

Feel free to contact us with comments or questions at [bikkurcholim@shaarzahav.org](mailto:bikkurcholim@shaarzahav.org).



# Thrilled to Be at Beit Sefer

BY SUSAN LEFF

"M om, would you please put on the CD with Cantor Sharon singing 'Hinei Ma Tov?'" Those words from the back seat of my car were like sweet music to my ears. My five-year-old daughter, who started Hebrew school this year, simply cannot get enough of the CD she received a few weeks ago from Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer (BSPM) Director Rebecca Weiner. Since we received the CD, it's been on heavy rotation in my car.

This year, my five-year-old couldn't wait to start Hebrew school at BSPM. She had heard all about it from her older sibling, who started BSPM last year. He loved it and encouraged his sister to want to enroll. Naturally, now she loves BSPM, too.

I feel so grateful to Rebecca, as well as my child's teacher Noa, for the BSPM program. BSPM engages our students by introducing new Jewish concepts like Jewish time – the Jewish calendar – and "Jewish space," and enriching their relationships with these concepts. Our students are encouraged to think beyond themselves and work toward creating peace and justice within their classroom, in the larger community

outside our doors, and throughout the entire world. BSPM provides our students with a Jewish lens through which they can view themselves, their communities and their world. BSPM also encourages our students to engage in tikkun olam with their communities.

Our students are also learning what it means to be a part of a vibrant, rich and diverse Jewish community. My children come to Hebrew school every Shabbat bubbling with enthusiasm and excitement. When Brad or I come to pick them up after their classes are finished, my children want to hang out and chat with their classmates and their teacher; they are simply overjoyed to be a part of such a wonderful community, and they never want it to end! I am delighted to see my children celebrating Shabbat and helping to lead the Shabbat prayers every week. They are ecstatic when their new book arrives each month from the PJ Library, a project of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation which sends children free books with Jewish themes and characters – stories that often draw their attention to themes they have been discussing at BSPM. BSPM is a program that both engages my children in a Jewish way and infuses my children with a love of Judaism and a commitment to their Jewish community.

FAMILY LAW

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# Passover

## Our Most Observed Holiday

BY PAUL COHEN

**F**or decades, national surveys of religious observance have shown that more Jews celebrate Passover than any other holiday. It is often suggested that the reason for this is because Passover is celebrated at home with family and friends sharing good food, lots of wine, stories and laughter.

It is a time to debate whose grandmother may have made the best gefilte fish or which guest brings the most appetizing charoset: Ashkenazic, Sephardi, Mizrahi or Iraqi style. Do you prefer your matzoh balls light as a feather or sinkers? Do you add ginger or parsley to the batter?

Do you still use the Maxwell House haggadah? Or have you purchased one of the hundreds of haggadot written since the explosion of haggadot published since the sixties, each with a specific focus or audience in mind? Or perhaps you've written your own?

Susan Leff and Brad Post are the parents of three children, two of whom attend our BSPM school. Susan writes about their home observance:

I love hosting a seder in our home for friends, family, and members of our community. My spouse and I have hosted a sit-down seder for 51 people, a bring-your-own-pillows-to-sit-down-

on-the-floor seder for families with small children, a seder for just the two of us plus one or two relatives, and everything in between.

While I was pregnant with my eldest child, I remember looking for a haggadah for our upcoming seder that would incorporate everything I love about the seder, minus any of the parts I didn't. When my search didn't pan out, I decided to sit down and write my own haggadah. Over the years, my haggadah, which I revised several times, became a labor of love and my way of fashioning a meaningful tradition for our children and our larger community of Jews and non-Jews. The process of writing my own haggadah only deepened my appreciation for the seder and the dramatic story of the Exodus. I love how each and every participant at our seder is responsible for making sure no one else is ever enslaved, and how each participant at a seder has a responsibility to share our story in a way that is universal, inclusive and meaningful to the next generation. The seder, with all its nuances, simplicities and complexities, and especially its emphasis on storytelling and its call to activism, is a gift I love to share with my family and our community.

We would love to hear about your seder traditions and customs. Please send your submissions to [JGF@shaarzahav.org](mailto:JGF@shaarzahav.org), so that we might feature some on our website. Also remember to sign up to attend our congregation's meaningful and fun second night seder on Saturday, April 5. You can register by going to [www.shaarzahav.org](http://www.shaarzahav.org) or picking up a registration form at the synagogue.

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Mike Abramson  
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## General Fund

Daniel Chesir in memory of Fay G. Cohen & Leon Groisser.  
 Sharyn Saslafsky in memory of Helen Mae Cohen.  
 Shoshana Levenberg & Andrea Guerra in memory of Fay G. Cohen.  
 Allan Berenstein in memory of Helen Mae Cohen.  
 James Carlson in memory of Helen Mae Cohen & George Mintzer.  
 Eileen Lynette in honor of Shoshana Levenberg & Andrea Guerra's wedding & Richard Meyerson's retirement.  
 Susan Tubbesing in memory of her aunt Fay Mutchnick's yahrzeit.  
 Jeanette Nichols in memory of George & Phyllis Mintzer & Isa Cymrot-Wu.  
 Judith Wolfe in memory of Fay G. Cohen, George Mintzer & Harry Winter & in honor of Kim Haveson.  
 Mark Mackler in honor of Phil Charney's birthday.  
 Ami Zusman in memory of her mother, Hilda Saperstein.  
 Brian Gay in honor of Judith Wolfe.  
 Andy Common in honor of James Carlson.

Ilana Drummond  
 First Rate directed by Michael Tyler.  
 Elliott Sprehn in loving memory of his mother, Leas'sa Lund Sprehn.  
 Robert Tannenbaum  
 James Carlson in honor of Cantor Sharon Bernstein.  
 Janice Oldak in memory of Fay G. Cohen.  
 Joan Goldman in memory of George Mintzer.  
 Allan Berenstein in memory of Aaron Nacamulli, Cheryl Orvis, Bill Ashley-Dobbin & Rabbi Jason Gaber.  
 Randy Weiss in honor of Cantor Sharon Bernstein.  
 Gerald Rosenstein in memory of Cheryl Orvis & Ron Wilmot.  
 Jeffrey Auman in memory of Masha Zakheim.

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## Phyllis Mintzer Education Fund Donations made in memory of George Mintzer

Maria Barzoloski, Allan Berenstein, Diane & Edwin Bernbaum, Sue Bojdak, Diana Buchbinder, Jonathan Funk & John Arnold, Elizabeth Katz, Ron Lezell, Steve Mazer, Ora Prochovnick, Ellen & Jerry Saliman, Robert Tat, Robert & Julie Tornberg, Ami Zusman

## Phyllis Mintzer Education Fund Donations

Ora Prochovnick in honor of Serena Stein's bat mitzvah.

## The Rabbi Julius & Pearl Funk Musical Events Fund

John Arnold in honor of Jonathan Funk.  
 Nancy Meyer  
 Jonathan Funk in memory of his grandmother Minnie Wiseman, uncle Joseph Wiseman, aunt Bernice Wiseman, & cousin Judy Davis.  
 Jonathan Funk & John Arnold in memory of Pearl Funk.

## Music in the Mishkan Fund

Gerald Rosenstein in memory of Gian-Piero Spagnolo  
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Nancy Meyer  
 Gerald Rosenstein in memory of his parents.

## Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Ellie Cohen & Michal Goralsky in honor of Rabbi Camille Shira Angel & in memory of Helen Mae Cohen.  
 Juliette Schlesinger in honor of Judith Wolfe  
 Robert Tannenbaum

## Bikkur Cholim

Allan Berenstein in memory of Eli Weinstein.

## Chai Building Fund

Allan Berenstein in memory of Ron Wilmot.



# Born to Be Jewish

BY KIRSTEN GUSTAVSON

As the sun gently dipped behind the mountain-tops that Friday night, we sang our happy welcome to the Shabbat bride. God was surely in this place and clearly, amazingly, in my heart as well. God was in this community of warm people who strove to be kind, to nurture each other, to care about the world and to celebrate all that is good in it. God was in this Jewish place, and with a shock of unexpected recognition, I knew I was home.

I was eleven.

Though my Jewish path didn't pass through the mikvah until I was thirty-four, it started in my childhood when my parents sent me to Camp Tawonga, the local sleepaway camp preferred by most parents of my peer group, Jews and non-Jews alike. As fellow CSZ member James Carlson likes to say, I wasn't born Jewish, but I was born to *be* Jewish, and I have known this deep in my bones since before adolescence.

My Jewish journey has brought me many gifts through the years – my 13-year-old best friend's used Hebrew school textbooks, my Conservadox high school boyfriend's family celebrations, Hillel in college, Lerhaus Judaica, Chochmat HaLev. My partner Amy and I joined CSZ a couple of years after we moved back to San Francisco. Though I had not been through an official conversion, this community embraced me and welcomed me to continue my Jewish life, on my own terms, in the company of other politically and liturgically progressive Jews.

Though I was born to be Jewish, two things held me back from formally converting.

First, I felt very strongly that the move had to come organically from within me and not be in response to anyone else's expectations. Ironically but not surprisingly, it was precisely



CSZ's lack of insistence that I officially join the tribe that created the space for me to actually do so, and for that, I am so very grateful.

Second, I was troubled by a deep theological question. If the only place in Jewish communal life where I could stand with

integrity was the far left, if the God described in the five books of Moses seemed vastly different from my own experience of the Divine, was it honest for me to convert? The answer "yes, I do belong here, *officially*" grew in me slowly; the final certainty arose when I read Judith Plaskow's book *Standing Again at Sinai*. I came to understand that it is not a departure from Jewish tradition to argue with our texts and turn them over and over again to make them meaningful to our very real lives today; there is, in fact, nothing more Jewish. A progressive Jew wrestles with and understands Torah as legitimately as Jews everywhere else.

Once this question settled for me, I started meeting with Paul Cohen, who served as the head of my Bet Din because CSZ was between rabbis at the time. We read and talked and I continued to participate in the rich life of our synagogue. I wrote the story of my Jewish journey, and eventually the time came to make it truly "official."

My visit to the mikvah was the deepest kind of homecoming. In my heart, eleven-year-old Kirsten, the girl who knew all along, danced and sang songs of great joy. She still shows up from time to time, happy as ever, never more so than when we're welcoming the Shabbat bride on a Friday night and Benjamin, son of Amy and Kirsten, is playing his drum on the bimah.

## Sponsorships

### December 5

Klezmer Shabbat, flowers, oneg, music and dancing sponsored by Martin Tannenbaum and Alex Ingersoll in memory of Larry Tannenbaum.

### December 12-13

Oneg sponsored by Phil Charney in honor of his birthday, and by Sara Beroff in celebration of her college graduation. Flowers sponsored by Tobia and Irasema Bruno in honor of their granddaughter Serena's bat mitzvah. Kiddush luncheon sponsored by the Stein and Bruno Family in honor of Serena's bat mitzvah.

### December 26-27

Oneg sponsored by Wayne Bender in memory of his father, Herman (Hy) Bender.

### January 2-3

Oneg sponsored by Joss Eldredge in memory of Phyllis and George Mintzer.

Flowers sponsored by Michael and Jane Rice in memory of Michael's mother, Paula Yasgour Rice.

### January 9 - 10

Flowers and Saturday kiddush luncheon sponsored by the Best-Leung family in honor of Jazmine's bat mitzvah.

### January 16-17

Oneg sponsored by Ann Bauman and Kelly Thiemann.

### January 23-24

Flowers and oneg sponsored by Ann Bauman and Kelly Thiemann in honor of our Scholar-in-Residence, Alan Morinis, and in honor of Rabbi Camille Shira Angel.

### February 6-7

Oneg sponsored by Edward & Ikuko Korthof in memory of Edward's father, Douglas.

Flowers sponsored by the Plotkin and Bealum family in honor of Langston's bar mitzvah.

Kiddush luncheon sponsored by Ethan Plotkin in honor of his nephew Langston's bar mitzvah.



## New Members:

David Gluck & Christine Young,  
Gabriel and Violet Gluck  
Edward & Ikuko Korthof, Hannah  
and Kei  
Daniel Risman Jones & Steven Huang

## Mazel Tov to

Elana Robinson-Lynch Story and Ilana  
Sherer, who are thrilled to welcome  
their son, Elliot Yonah Story Sherer  
(Eli for short), born 11/18/14.

Howard Steiermann on receiving Semi-  
cha from the Jewish Spiritual Lead-  
ers Institute.

Rabbi Jo Hirschmann and Rabbi Nancy  
Wiener whose book, *Maps and Mean-  
ing, Levitical Models for Contemporary  
Care*, has been named a finalist in  
the 2014 National Jewish Book  
Awards from the Jewish Book Coun-  
cil. Rabbi Jo Hirschmann is a past  
member of CSZ.

Serena Stein on her bat mitzvah.

Jazmine Best-Leung on her bat  
mitzvah.

Langston Bealum on his bar mitzvah.

## Our Condolences to

Rabbi Camille Angel on the loss of her  
uncle, Ira Karp.

Donna Fein and Shelli Rawlings-Fein  
on the loss of their uncle, Norman  
(Bill) Stickle.

Andy Schwartz on the loss of his uncle,  
Louis Rome.

Carolyn Reiser, Karren Shorofsky and  
Julia Shorofsky on the loss of their  
father, father-in-law and grandfather,  
John Shealy Reiser.

Flavio Epstein on the loss of his uncle,  
Mario Borger.

## Member Yahrzeits

### March

- 6 Pearl Lewin
- 7 Isabel Fishman
- 8 Seth Charney
- 8 Batya Kalis
- 16 Theodore Mendonca Jr.
- 16 Jamie Rosen
- 21 Rabbi Sanford Lowe
- 23 Noah Nacamulli
- 23 Paul Nemrow
- 28 Neill Rosen
- 31 James Harris Freedgood
- 31 Marvin Steele

### April

- 1 Adam Harris
- 2 Ronald Gertz
- 3 Abraham Cohen
- 6 Dennis Mitchell
- 21 Robert Sterman
- 23 Michael Randall
- 24 Norma Faini-Pick

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# Music in the Mishkan

## Sundays March 8 and May 31, 4 pm



Music in the Mishkan turns 16 this year!

Music Director and CSZ member Randall



Weiss has put together an exciting series of two  
chamber music concerts in 2015, including

Cantor Sharon Bernstein presenting  
an original Yiddish folk song cycle  
entitled "Froyenlibe un Leb'n"  
(Women's Lives and Loves).

Check the CSZ website for details.

